SCH 2008122079

NOTICE OF PREPARATION

FROM: Mehdi Morshed
Executive Director
California High-Speed Rail Authority
925 L Street, Suite 1425
Sacramento, CA 95814

SUBJECT: Revised Notice of Preparation of a Project Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for a San Francisco to San Jose High-Speed Train system, primarily along the Caltrain Rail Corridor (Note: Review period ends March 6, 2009)

The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority), as the Lead Agency for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process for a proposed California High-Speed Train (HST) system, is issuing this Notice of Preparation of a Project EIR/EIS for the San Francisco to San Jose section of the proposed HST system.

This NOP initiates the State CEQA process and the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement for the San Francisco to San Jose section of the proposed California High Speed Train System. The Authority is issuing the NOP to solicit public and agency input into the development of the scope of the EIR and to advise the public that outreach activities will be conducted by the Authority and its representatives in the preparation of the combined EIR/EIS. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), an operating administration with the United States Department of Transportation, will serve as federal lead agency for the federal environmental review process complying with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The FRA has responsibility for oversight of the safety of railroad operations, including the safety of any proposed high-speed train system. The FRA will publish a Notice of Intent (NOI) in the *Federal Register*, announcing the agency's intention to initiate the federal environmental review process for this section of the HST project.

The Authority and the FRA completed a Final Statewide Program EIR/EIS in August 2005 as the first-phase of a tiered environmental review process for the proposed California HST system. The Authority and the FRA completed a second program EIR/EIS in July 2008 to identify a preferred alignment for the Bay Area to Central Valley section of the HST system. The Bay Area to Central Valley HST Program EIR/EIS identified a preferred alignment following the Caltrain rail right-of-way, between San Francisco and San Jose along the San Francisco Peninsula, and through the Pacheco Pass via Henry Miller Road, between San Jose and the Central Valley. Tiering from the two program EIR/EISs, the Authority and the FRA will prepare a project EIR/EIS for the San Francisco to San Jose section of the HST along the Caltrain corridor.

DATES: Written comments on the scope of the San Francisco to San Jose HST project EIR/EIS should be provided to the Authority at the earliest possible date but no later than March 6, 2009. Public scoping meetings are scheduled from January 22 through January 29, 2009 as noted below.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the scope should be sent to Mr. Dan Leavitt, Deputy Director, ATTN: San Francisco to San Jose HST Project EIR/EIS, California High-Speed Rail Authority, 925 L Street, Suite 1425, Sacramento, CA 95814, or via email with subject line "San Francisco to San Jose HST" to: comments@hsr.ca.gov. Comments may also be provided orally or in writing at the scoping meetings.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Dan Leavitt at (916) 322-1397 or at the above noted address.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) was established in 1996 and is authorized and directed by statute to undertake the planning and development of a proposed statewide HST network that is fully coordinated with other public transportation services. The Authority adopted a Business Plan in June 2000, which reviewed the economic feasibility of an 800-mile-long HST system capable of speeds in excess of 200 miles per hour on a dedicated, fully grade-separated state-of-the-art track. The Authority released an updated Business Plan in November 2008

In 2005, the Authority and FRA completed a Final Program EIR/EIS for the Proposed California High Speed Train System (Statewide Program EIR/EIS), as the first phase of a tiered environmental review process. The Authority certified the Final Program EIR under CEQA and approved the proposed HST System, and FRA issued a Record of Decision under NEPA on the Federal Program EIS. This statewide program EIR/EIS established the purpose and need for the HST system, analyzed an HST system, and compared it with a No Project/No Action Alternative and a Modal Alternative. In approving the statewide program EIR/EIS, the Authority and the FRA selected the HST Alternative, selected certain corridors/general alignments and general station locations for further study, incorporated mitigation strategies and design practices, and specified further measures to guide the development of the HST system in site-specific project environmental review to avoid and minimize potential adverse environmental impacts. In the subsequent Bay Area to Central Valley HST Final Program EIR/EIS, the Authority and FRA selected the Caltrain right-of-way between San Francisco and San Jose as the preferred alternative to connect with the San Jose to Central Valley section.

The San Francisco to San Jose HST Project EIR/EIS will tier from the Final Statewide Program EIR/EIS and the Final Bay Area to Central Valley HST Program EIR/EIS in accordance with Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, (40 CFR § 1508.28) and State CEQA Guidelines (14 C.C.R. §15168[b]). Tiering will ensure that the San Francisco to San Jose HST Project EIR/EIS builds upon all previous work prepared for and incorporated in the Statewide Program EIR/EIS and the Bay Area to Central Valley HST Program EIR/EIS.

The Project EIR/EIS will describe site-specific environmental impacts, will identify specific mitigation measures to address those impacts and will incorporate design practices to avoid and minimize potential adverse environmental impacts. The FRA and the Authority will assess the site characteristics, size, nature, and timing of proposed site-specific HST project sections to determine whether the adverse impacts are potentially significant and whether adverse impacts can be avoided or mitigated. This and other project EIR/EISs will identify and evaluate reasonable and feasible site-specific alignment alternatives, and evaluate the impacts from construction, operation, and maintenance of the HST system. Information and documents regarding this HST environmental review process will be made available through the Authority's Internet site: http://www.cahighspeedrail.gov/.

Project Objectives/Purpose and Need: The purpose of the proposed HST system is to provide a new mode of high-speed intercity travel that would link major metropolitan areas of the state; interface with international airports, mass transit, and highways; and provide added capacity to meet increases in intercity travel demand in California in a manner sensitive to and protective of California's unique natural resources. The need for a high-speed train (HST) system is directly related to the expected growth in population, and increases in intercity travel demand in California over the next twenty years and beyond. With the growth in travel demand, there will be an increase in travel delays arising from the growing congestion on California's highways and at airports. In addition, there will be negative effects on the economy, quality of life, and air quality in and around California's metropolitan areas from a transportation system that will be come less reliable as travel demand increases. The intercity highway system, commercial airports, and conventional passenger rail serving the intercity travel market are currently operating at or near capacity, and will require large public investments for maintenance and expansion to meet existing demand and future growth.

Alternatives: San Francisco to San Jose HST Project EIR/EIS will consider a No Action or No Project Alternative and a HST Alternative for the San Francisco to San Jose corridor.

No Action Alternative: The No Action Alternative (No Project or No Build) represents the conditions in the corridor as it existed in 2007, and as it would exist based on programmed and funded improvements to the intercity transportation system and other reasonably foreseeable projects through 2035, taking into account the following sources of information: State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) for all modes of travel, airport plans, intercity passenger rail plans, and city and county plans.

HST Alternative: The Authority proposes to construct, operate and maintain an electric-powered steel-wheel-on-steel-rail HST system, about 800 miles long, capable of operating speeds of 220 mph on mostly dedicated, fully graded-separated tracks, with state-of-the-art safety, signaling, and automated train control systems. The San Francisco to San Jose HST preferred alignment selected by the Authority and FRA follows the Caltrain right-of-way from San Francisco to San Jose and in this area the HST would operate at speeds below 150 mph and would share tracks with Caltrain express commuter trains. Further engineering studies to be undertaken as part of this EIR/EIS process will examine and refine alignments in the Caltrain right-of-way. The entire alignment would be grade separated. The options to be considered for the design of grade separated roadway crossings would include (1) depressing the street to pass under the rail lines; (2) elevating the street to pass over the rail lines; and (3) leaving the street as-is and constructing rail line improvements to pass over or under the local street. In addition, alternative sites for right-of-way maintenance, train storage facilities, and a train service and inspection facility will be evaluated in the San Francisco to San Jose HST project area. See Figures 1A and 1B for maps of the San Francisco to San Jose section of the HST system.

The preferred station in the City of San Francisco is the Transbay Transit Center; in the City of Millbrae the existing Millbrae BART/Caltrain Station; and in the City of San Jose is the Intermodal Diridon Station. These station locations were selected by the Authority and FRA through the Bay Area to Central Valley HST Program EIR/EIS process considering the project purpose and need, and the program objectives. Potential station locations in the City of Redwood City at the existing Caltrain Station near downtown and in the City of Palo Alto at the existing Caltrain Station near downtown will also be evaluated in this project EIR/EIS. Alternative station sites at or near the selected locations may be identified and evaluated in this Project EIR/EIS.

Probable Effects: The purpose of the EIR/EIS process is to explore in a public setting the effects of the proposed project on the physical, human, and natural environment. The FRA and the Authority will continue the tiered evaluation of all significant environmental, social, and economic impacts of the construction and operation of the HST system. Impact areas to be addressed include transportation impacts; safety and security; land use and zoning; land acquisition, displacements, and relocations and cumulative and secondary; cultural resource impacts, including impacts on historical and archaeological resources and parklands/recreation areas; neighborhood compatibility and environmental justice; natural resource impacts including air quality, wetlands, water resources, noise, vibration, energy, wildlife and ecosystems, including endangered species. Measures to avoid, minimize, and mitigate all adverse impacts will be identified and evaluated.

Scoping and Comments: The Authority encourages broad participation in the EIR/EIS process during scoping and review of the resulting environmental documents. Comments and suggestions are invited from all interested agencies and the public to insure the full range of issues related to the proposed action and all reasonable alternatives are addressed and all significant issues are identified. In particular, the Authority is interested in determining whether there are areas of environmental concern where there might be a potential for significant site-specific impacts. In response to this NOP, public agencies with jurisdiction are requested to advise FRA and the Authority of the applicable permit and environmental review requirements of each agency, and the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to the agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project. Public scoping meetings have been scheduled as an important component of the scoping process for both the State and

Federal environmental review. The scoping meetings described in this Notice will be advertised locally and included in additional public notification. Scoping meetings are scheduled for the following cities:

- SamTrans Auditorium, 1250 San Carlos Avenue, San Carlos, California, January 22, 2009 from 3 pm to 8 pm.
- San Francisco State University, 835 Market Street, 6th Floor (Rooms 673-674), San Francisco, California, January 27, 2009 from 3 pm to 8 pm.
- Santa Clara Convention Center, 5001 Great America Parkway, Great America Meeting Rooms 1 & 2, Santa Clara, California, January 29, 2009 from 3 pm to 8 pm.

Public agencies are requested to send their responses to this Notice of Preparation to the Authority at the earliest possible date but no later than March 6, 2009.

Please send your response and direct any comments or questions regarding this Project to Mr. Dan Leavitt, Deputy Director of the California High Speed Rail Authority at the address shown above.

Date: 1/8/2009

Signature: For

Mehdi Morshed, Executive Director

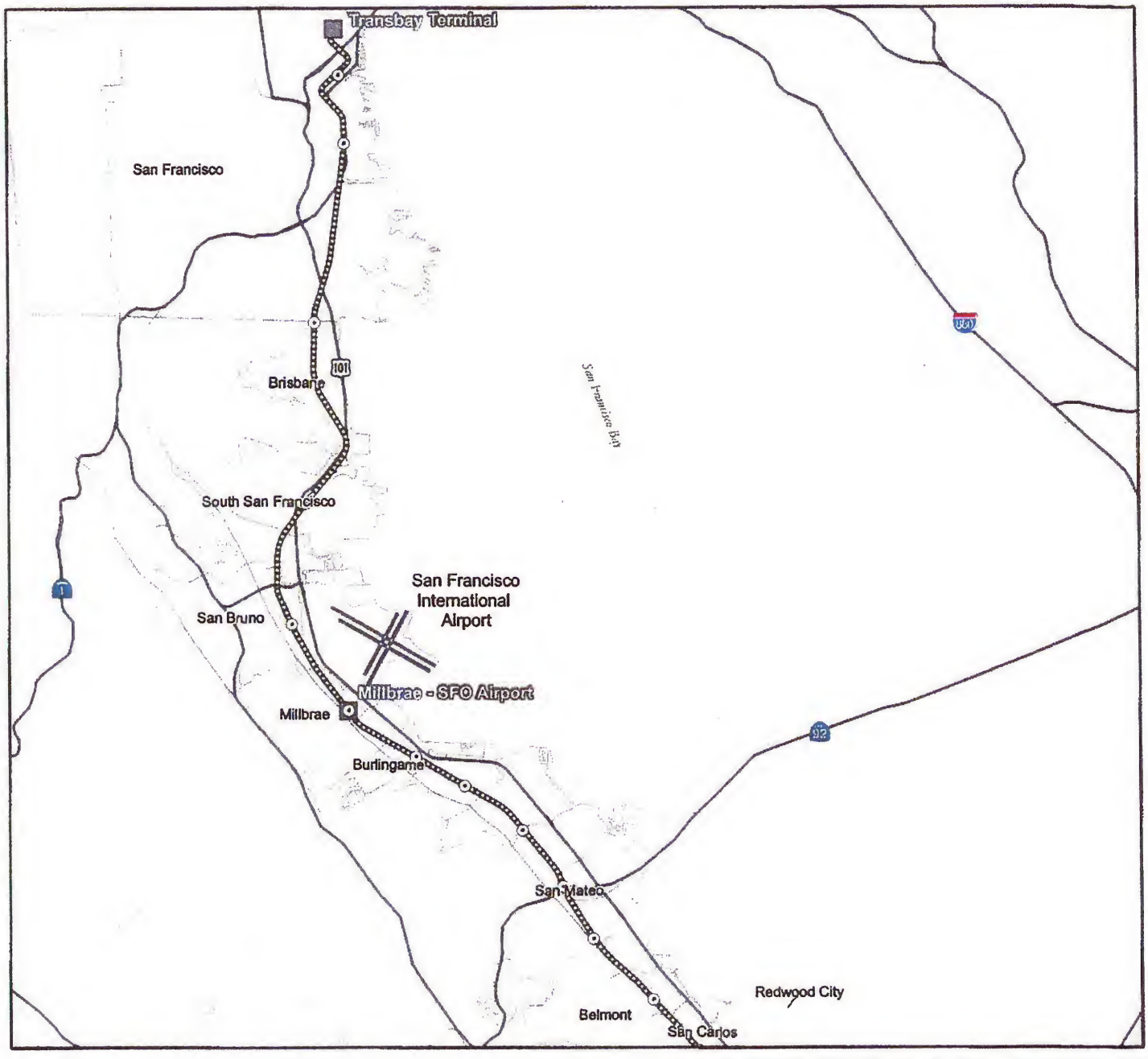

FIGURE 1A

California High Speed Train

San Francisco to San Jose HST Project - Northern Segment

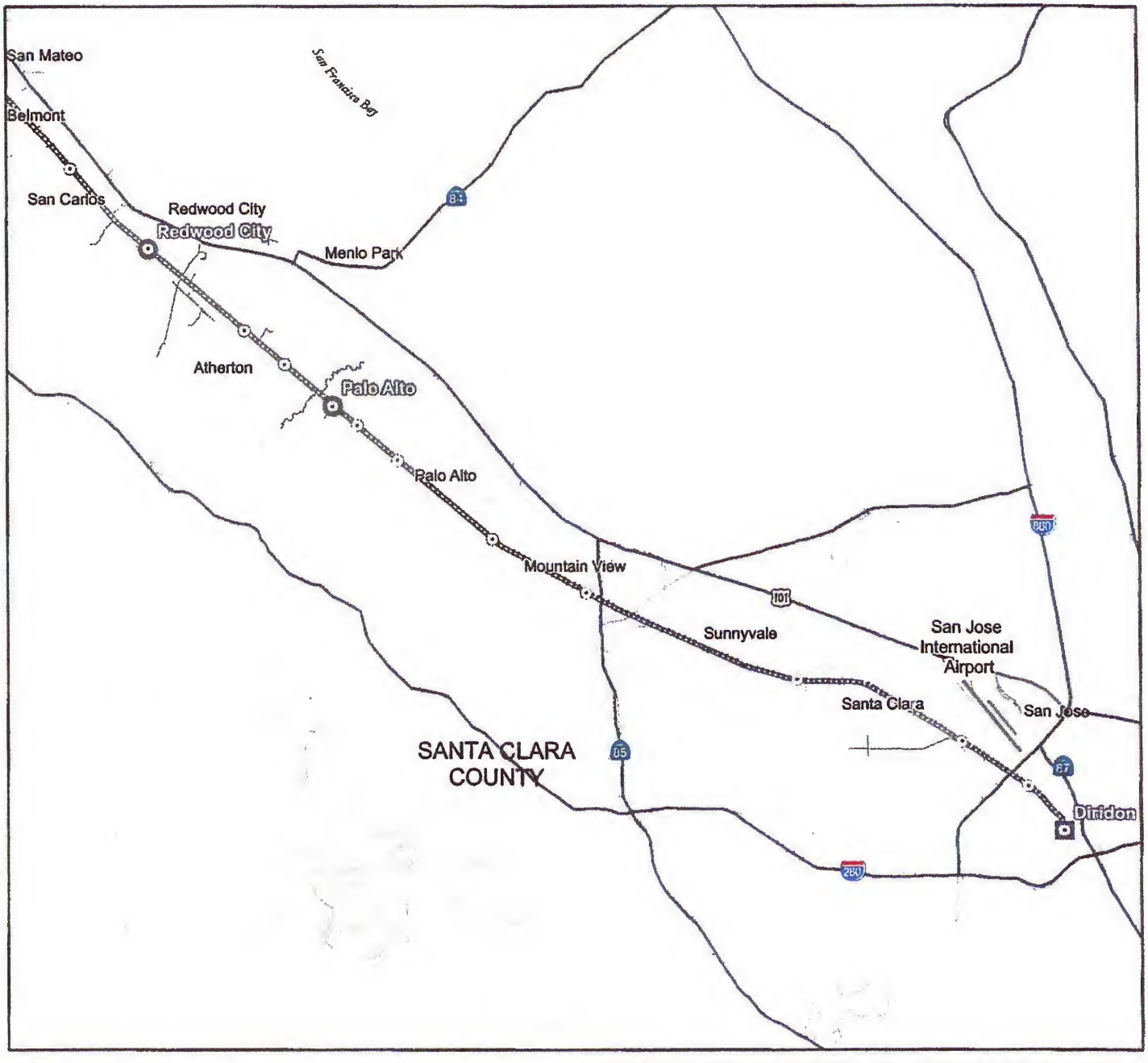

FIGURE 1B

California High Speed Train

San Francisco to San Jose HST Project - Southern Segment